



# Heddon Crackleback

I've recently written about some other Heddon lures, like the more famous Heddon River Runt. This one, though, you may not have heard of. In "collecting circles," it's considered a modern bait. That's something that makes me feel good since it came out the year after I was born. It's nice to know I'm not quite as old as my children think I am.

## Crackleback history

The Heddon Crackleback was first produced in 1971. This was actually a "Daisy-Heddon" bait as Heddon had been purchased by Daisy Manufacturing in 1962. Yes, that same Daisy that made the BB guns we all grew up with. The original owners of Daisy-Heddon were the Murchinson brothers, a wealthy oil family from Texas, who founded and were the first owner of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys.

The Crackleback was a plastic, shad-shaped lure with a long diving lip and a fish-shaped tail. It was meant to dive quickly and was made for "deep-feeding gamefish. Runs extremely deep on retrieve, floats high at rest." It was supposed to be virtually snag proof due to the long lip and the high buoyancy of the bait.

The Crackleback was made in two sizes, a 3/8-ounce, 3 7/8-inch (catalog #8000) and a 5/8-ounce, 4 1/2-inch (catalog #8050). It was made of plastic, had painted eyes and featured two treble hooks. The name of the lure, "Heddon Crackleback," appears on the bottom side of the diving lip in military-type stenciling.

The name "Crackleback" refers to the paint design which gives the appearance of cracked or crackled paint. Very early fishing lures by Heddon and other companies used this paint design in the early 1900s. Back then, however, Heddon didn't call it crackleback, but instead referred to it as "fancy back." When the company was first getting started, this paint design was achieved by baking the lure in an oven (early on at home in the kitchen) until the paint would heat up and crack.



Vintage ad for the Heddon Crackleback.



Stencil on lip of Crackleback.

The Crackleback was made from 1971 up until 1976. I found very little advertising on the bait reflecting a period of the companies' history where they were more focused on the Daisy side of the business rather than Heddon. This eventually resulted in struggling sales on the Heddon side of the business. In fact, the only ads I came across were from tackle shops selling the lures. See the accompanying example of the lure for sale for *only 99 cents!*

As Heddon transitioned out of Dowagiac, Michigan to Fort Smith, Arkansas in 1984, there was one last brief and strange mention of this bait again. This time in NPG color.



White/Green Crackleback



Crackleback and box.



Yellow/Orange Crackleback.

## Colors and packaging

The Crackleback came in a cardboard box with a plastic film. See an example in the photo.

In its first year of manufacture, Heddon's 1971 catalog listed ten colors. They were BAR-Barfish, BOC-Black/Orange, GBC-Green/Black, GSD-Green Shad, WBC-White/Black, WBR-White/Brown, WGC-White/Green, WYC-White Yellow, YBC-Yellow/Black and YOC-Yellow/Orange.

In 1972, they added the color SSD-Silver Shad. These eleven colors made up the standard colors for the bait for the remainder of the years of production.

Like most Heddon baits, some uncataloged colors have also been found. Some of those include CBC-Chrome/Black, L-Perch, NC-Natural Crab, RH-Red Head, VGE-Metallic Green and XRY-Yellow Shore Minnow. Surely there are more to be found.

One additional oddity is the NPG color

mentioned (Nickel Plated Green?) that was possibly made during the transition out of Dowagiac.

## Collector's value

A Heddon Crackleback in excellent condition without the box sells for anywhere from \$5 to \$15 depending on the color, making this a very affordable bait. With the matching box in excellent condition, the price goes up to around \$20 to \$50 depending on the color and its rarity. This is a great bait to start off collecting if you are new to the hobby or want to fish an older bait. **MWO**

*Keith Bell and his family live in Neenah, Wisconsin but spend a lot of time fishing northern Wisconsin. Keith has been an avid angler and outdoorsman his entire life. His passion for fishing is matched only by his passion for fishing history and preservation. He is the founder and owner of MyBaitShop.com, the world's largest online vintage tackle and history website. You can reach Keith at his website or at keith.bell@mybaitshop.com*

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